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SUBJECT: FM STOERE AND AMBASSADOR WHITNEY ON THE MIDDLE  
EAST, RUSSIA AND WHITE HOUSE VISITS

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Kristen Bauer  
for reasons 1.4 b and d

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ambassador Whitney met with Foreign  
Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere on June 15 over lunch and  
discussed a variety of issues including the Middle East,  
Afghanistan, Russia and missile defense, a White House visit  
for Prime Minister Stoltenberg and the New Embassy Compound.  
END SUMMARY

MIDDLE EAST

12. (C) The situation in Gaza is a topic of high interest to  
Stoere and he expressed agreement for U.S. support of Abbas.  
Stoere felt that the GON's position on normalizing relations  
with Hamas members of the government has been vindicated  
because isolation weakened the moderate Hamas elements and  
strengthened the extremists. He stated that he is not  
surprised that Hamas would revert to the violence that it  
knows best, given the failure of the diplomatic path of the  
New Unity Government. Stoere was pessimistic of any plans  
for a renewal of the unity government because while Abbas can  
call for a new government, Hamas would still have to give its  
approval for a new government to have any chance of  
effectiveness. This is unlikely to occur. Stoere believes  
that the international community has to show progress for the  
new PM, Fayyad. He made no mention of making contacts with  
Hamas. Interestingly, Stoere made a cryptic comment at the  
end of this discussion that it is important for MFA to  
recognize that ME is really a [sideshow](#) for Norway. Norway  
can be helpful given their contacts but their role should not  
be overstated.

AFGHANISTAN AND THE TELEMAR BATTALION

13. (C) Stoere was more optimistic on Afghanistan and believes  
progress has been made on both the military and the civilian  
side. One area of concern was the lack of progress on some  
of the GON priority projects, such as creating a civil  
service academy to train Afghans. Ambassador Whitney  
recommended further contact with Mark Ward, Senior Deputy  
Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East in USAID,  
who recently visited the MFA and who appreciated the need to  
develop Afghan human capital. On the security side  
Ambassador Whitney asked about future Norwegian contributions  
to ISAF. Stoere clearly indicated not to expect extension of  
the Norwegian Special Forces in Kabul beyond the current six  
month commitment. (Note: This was repeated publicly by the  
Defense Minister this week.) When Ambassador Whitney asked  
about the possibility of sending the Telemark battalion to  
Afghanistan Stoere did not immediately reject it but said  
neutrally that it depended on the assignment, the parameters,  
and so forth.

RUSSIA AND MISSILE DEFENSE

14. (C) Despite the reference to opposition to all missile defense systems in the government's platform, Stoere does not see NATO activity on missile defense (MD) as a real problem for the government. He said that comments by the defense spokesman for the Socialist Left party (member of the coalition and fiercely anti-missile defense) that the GON should be more aggressive in its opposition to MD should be viewed as isolated and not reflective of the coalition's position. Stoere reacted somewhat defensively when Ambassador Whitney suggested the PM Stoltenberg's skeptical comments on MD while during a visit to Russia were unfortunate. Stoere claimed that the media distorted what the PM said but did not disagree when the Ambassador pointed to specific comments that were unhelpful.

#### VISIT TO THE WHITE HOUSE

15. (C) Stoere suggested a visit by the Prime Minister to the US with a White House visit could come when Norway opens the Snohvit LNG plant and the first delivery of Norwegian LNG to the U.S. arrives.

#### THE NEC

16. (C) The Ambassador briefed Stoere on the progress with the New Embassy Compound and encouraged him to see if there was a mechanism to push the court decision to after the local elections. Stoere agreed with the embassy's decision to hold the application for a building permit until after local elections.

#### COMMENT

17. (C) It is not surprising the Stoere claimed some vindication of his policy initiative on normalizing relations

with Hamas. There was no discussion of possible steps Norway may consider to help the situation. In fact, Deputy FM Raymond Johansen recently stated that Norway was powerless to influence the situation at present. On sending new forces to ISAF, Stoere was equivocal. He did not immediately rule out sending the Telemark battalion, as he did on the question of extending the Special Forces in Kabul, but he was not supportive either. We speculate that the deal struck with the Socialist Left party on the Special Forces was to do a single deployment only. Since there was no deal on the Telemark that leaves it at least theoretically open. END

COMMENT  
Whitney